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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

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FROM : [REDACTED]  
OPEI/IS

SUBJECT: Net Assessments in Interagency Estimates  
of the Soviet Threat

I. Introduction

A. Background -- This effort is part of a larger IC Staff effort whose purpose is to assess the validity of statements relative to interagency estimates made by "Team B." Specifically, Team B concluded that de facto net assessments were frequently made in these estimates and that such net assessments were often poorly supported.

B. Objectives -- The objective of this effort is to document the extent to which recent interagency products make "net assessment" statements:

- Explicit or implicit judgments about force effectiveness
- Statements or judgments about Soviet views of force effectiveness.

For these identified net assessments, the supporting analysis/evidence is to be identified. Where possible, reasons for any deficiencies found in the assessment process are also to be identified.

C. Scope -- The effort to date has concentrated on the area of "Soviet Forces for International Conflict." Most of the effort has been on estimates made in 1974 and 1975. A limited investigation of estimates in 1972 and 1976 was also made.

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## II. Findings

### A. Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict

#### 1. Areas of Assessment

This assessment is concerned with the overall strategic balance, with special emphasis on the situation where the Soviets initiate a "damage limiting" attack on the U.S. and the U.S. retaliates with a "counter-value" attack. The implicit measure of balance is the resulting damage to each side's population and industry and the capabilities of the surviving strategic military forces.

In this context, the areas of interest may be broken down as follows:

- (1) Overall Strategic Balance
- (2) Soviet Damage Limiting Attack
  - (a) Soviet Antisatellite Defense
  - (b) Threat to U.S. ICBM Silos
  - (c) U.S. Bomber Prelaunch Survivability
  - (d) U.S. SSBN Survivability
  - (e) U.S. Command Control and Communications Survivability
- (3) U.S. Countervalue Attack
  - (a) Soviet Defense against Ballistic Missiles
  - (b) Soviet Air Defense
  - (c) Soviet Civil Defense

All of the items in categories 2 and 3 are subelements of category 1. Category 2e is not explicitly addressed in the interagency estimates but significantly affects the

timing and scope of the U.S. countervalue attack. Several other potentially relevant areas of interest that are not included in the above list are:

- (4) Other areas
  - (a) U.S. Air Defense
  - (b) U.S. Defense against Ballistic Missiles (if deployed)
  - (c) U.S. Civil Defense
  - (d) Soviet Command, Control and Communications Survivability
  - (e) U.S. Antisatellite Defense
  - (f) Threat to Soviet Silos
  - (g) Soviet SSBN Survivability

The importance of these additional areas is at least partially dependent on the nature and timing of the Soviet countervalue attack. Items 4f and 4g are addressed in the interagency estimates.

The "mirror image" to this situation, i.e., a U.S. damage limiting attack followed by a Soviet retaliatory countervalue attack is also of interest. In this case, Soviet Bomber Prelaunch Survivability must also be considered.

## 2. Estimates for 1975

The estimate reviewed was NIE 11-3/8-75, "Soviet Forces For Intercontinental Conflict Through the Mid-1980s." Net assessments in the areas of interest listed in the previous section were identified and the supporting analysis/evidence was described (see Annexes A and B). A summary of the assessments and supporting analysis is given in Tables 1 and 2. Explicit or implicit net assessments have been made in the majority of cases. The support for these assessments is rated as good in about half the cases. A significant number

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of cases are rated as poor. Most significantly, the support given for the assessment relative to the overall strategic balance is rated as having only fair support.

### 3. Estimates for 1972

The estimates reviewed were NIE 11-8-72, "Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Attack," and NIE 11-3-72, "Soviet Strategic Defenses." Fewer net assessment statements are made than in 1975. Those that are made are for the most part better supported because the assessments are more clear cut, requiring less in the way of support.

### 4. Estimate for 1976

The estimate reviewed was NIE 11-3/8-76, "Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict Through the Mid-1980s." Support for those net assessments that are made is considerably improved over that for 1975. This is especially noteworthy in view of the increasing Soviet capabilities in a number of areas.

### C. Conclusions

The "Team B" conclusion relative to poorly supported de facto net assessments is valid. This is especially so relative to future capabilities. There appear to be a number of good reasons for this situation, including:

- Growing current and potential Soviet capabilities have reduced the number of trivial assessments.

- Pressure to present the significance of an otherwise complex mass of data.

- Reluctance of the Intelligence Community to perform complete net assessments because of incomplete data on U.S. forces and their strategic employment doctrine.

- Speculative nature of future (5-10 year) threat and likely U.S. counteractions.

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The situation in the 1976 estimate, however, was improved over that for 1975. Assessments that were made were generally more complete and cautionary statements were made to indicate where analysis simplifications were used.

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Annex A -- Net Assessment Statements in NIE 11-3/8-75  
Relative to:

Overall Strategic Balance  
Soviet Antisatellite Defense  
Threat to U.S. ICBM Silos  
U.S. Bomber Prelaunch Survivability  
U.S. SSBN Survivability  
Soviet Defense against Ballistic Missiles  
Soviet Air Defense  
Soviet Civil Defense -- no net assessments  
Threat to Soviet ICBM Silos

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Annex B -- Net Assessment Statements in NIE 11-3/8-75  
Relative to Soviet Perception of:

Overall Strategic Balance  
Soviet Antisatellite -- no net assessments  
Threat to U.S. ICBM Silos  
U.S. Bomber Prelaunch Survivability  
U.S. SSBN Survivability  
Soviet Defense against Ballistic Missiles -- no net assessments  
Soviet Air Defense  
Soviet Civil Defense  
Threat to Soviet ICBM Silos -- no net assessments

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